AN

ESSAY

Towards making the

KNOWLEDGE

OF

RELIGION

EASY

To the MEANEST CAPACITY.

Being a short and plain Account of the

Doctrines and *Rules of* CHRISTIANITY.

By the most Rev. Dr. *EDWARD SYNGE*,

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Follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart. But foolish and unlearned Questions avoid, knowing that they do gender Strifes.

2 Tim. ii. 22, 23.

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TO THE

READER.

IF thou wanteſt Inſtruction in Religion, and art not furniſhed with better than what this little Book may afford thee, do not content thyſelf with once or twice reading of it, but read it over a great many Times; and if there be any Paſſage in it which ſeems doubtful or difficult to thee, propoſe it to the Miniſter, or to any other diſcreet and well-inſtructed Chriſtian, that he may explain it to thee, and never leave off until thou art arrived to a clear Knowledge, and ready Remembrance of all the Things that are therein contained. And when thou art thus far grounded in the Knowledge of Religion, let thyſelf to the diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures, and ſuch other Books as may farther improve thee in it, and effectually ſtir thee up to the diligent Practice of it. *If ye know theſe Things, happy are ye if ye do them.* John xiii. 17.

PREFACE.

TOO many there are of those that profess Christianity, who understand but very little of the true Design and Import of it; and while they are so little acquainted with that which ought to be the Rule of their Faith and Actions, it is not to be wondered, that their Opinions are absurd and foolish, and their Lives wicked.

Many good Sermons are preached, and Books published for the Instruction of the People: But as a Lecture (however learned and rational) in any Art or Science, is not to be understood by any Man who is not first made acquainted with the general System of it; so Sermons and other excellent Discourses are but lost to abundance of Men, for want of their being before-hand carefully grounded in the Knowledge of those things which generally all Christians do agree in.

I grant, indeed, that such things as these Men ought to have learned by attending on the Work of Catechising in their younger Days: But where they have neglected this so necessary a thing in their Youth, we ought, in Charity to their Souls, to use the best and easiest Method we can, to bring them to it in their riper Years.

It has been the Judgment of some wise and learned Men, that the most effectual way, under God, to bring all Christian People to a true and profitable understanding of, and Readiness in, their Religion, would be, to have a set of plain and short Discourses composed, equal in Number to the Sun-

days

days in one Year, and plainly, and fully containing the whole Body of Christianity; and to have one of these Discourses read every Lord's-Day in each Christian Congregation; and so to continue from one Year to another: And if Men could be content with wholesome Instruction, and were not so strangely fond of Novelty, of Fancy, and Variety of Expression, I think indeed that a better way than this could not be contrived.

And this very thing brought it into my Mind, that if any reasonable Draught of the whole Christian Religion could be made in very plain Language, and brought within the Compass of one Hour's reading: such a little Sort of a Book being put into the Hands of those who have not Money to buy, or Leisure to read those that are larger; and being often read in private by single Persons, in Families, and in English Schools, and being given in Parcels to Boys at the Latin School to translate, as their Sunday's Exercise, might be of extraordinary good Use, in order to the imprinting, and for ever keeping fresh in their Minds and Memories, such orthodox and necessary Notions of the Christian Doctrine, as may always have a most profitable Influence both upon their Faith and Practice. In pursuance of which Design, I have composed this small Work; and should be very much pleased if some judicious Person, who is a sufficient Master both of Clearness of Thought, and Plainness as well as Conciseness of Expression, would take the same thing in Hand; who I easily grant, might perform it much better than I have done.

The Reader is to expect no more here, but a general Account of the necessary Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity: My Proposal being only to give Men, of a mean Capacity, a true Notion of these Things, by way of a Foundation for farther Knowledge. And for the more particular handling of such

Matters

Matters and Quotations of Scripture upon which they rely, I refer them to those many Sermons and other excellent Discourses which they have such frequent Opportunities both of hearing and reading. I shall only add, that it may be of good Use for a Man, as often as he intends to receive the Holy Communion, to read over this or some such other little Book, which may briefly put him in mind of all the Particulars of his Duty; and so be a Help to him both in the recollecting of his Sins, and renewing of his holy Resolutions.

AN

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To the MEANEST CAPACITY.

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Doctrines and *Rules* of CHRISTIANITY.

ALL that God requires from any Man, in order to everlasting Happiness, is *First*, to *believe* those Things which he has made known; which is called *Faith*: *Secondly*, to *live* according to the *Rules* or *Laws* which he has given to us; which is called *Obedience*: And, *Thirdly*, when a Man finds that he has any Way *broken* the Law of God, to be *sorrowful* for it, to confess it to God, to beg his *Pardon* for it, and diligently to amend it for the Time to come; which is called *Repentance*.

These three Things then, namely, *Faith*, *Obedience*, and *Repentance*, do contain the whole Substance of the Duty of every Christian.

I begin with the first of these three; And in order to enlighten the Mind, and strengthen the Faith of a Christian, I shall endeavour, *First*, to shew what are the chiefest of those

those things which God has made known to mankind, in order to our belief: And *Secondly*, what Grounds and Assurance we have, upon which to believe them.

As to the former of these, the Things made known by God to be believed by us, are chiefly these:

First, *That there is a God*, who made the *Heavens*, the *Earth*, and all things therein contained; and has disposed all Things in that most useful and beautiful Order in which they still continue. That *God* is not a *Body*, like unto us, nor subject unto any such Frailties or Imperfections as we are: But that he is a Spirit, Eternal, without beginning or ending, most *holy*, *just* and *true*, *most gracious* and *merciful*: That he knows *all* Things, can do *all* Things, and is present *every where*, without being confined to any place. And although there neither is nor can be more than *one God*, yet in the Unity of the Godhead, or Divine Nature, there are *three distinct Persons*, of whom frequent mention is made in the Holy Scriptures, and to each of whom both the Names, and Attributes of God are often ascribed: The first of these Persons is called the *Father*, the second the *Son*, and sometimes the *Word*, and the third the *Holy Ghost*, or *Spirit*. And this, in short, is the meaning of what we call the doctrine of the Holy, Blessed, and Undivided *Trinity*: Which is to be received and believed, because *God* has made it known to us; but ought not to be curiously pried into, because it is *above our Understanding to comprehend*. As long as we are here in the body, we see such Things as these but as *through* a *Glass darkly*; but when we shall be advanced to the perfect State of the Blessed in Heaven, then we shall see *Face to Face*, and *know even as also we are known*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

To

To the first of these Persons, namely to the *Father*, the Holy Scriptures do more immediately ascribe the Work of creating the World by his Almighty Power, and of governing and ordering it, and all Things in it, by his good Providence.

As to the second of these Persons, who is called the *Son*, or the *Word*, we are taught to believe that he came down from Heaven, and took the Nature of Man upon him; and became *Man for our Sake*; like unto us in all Things, *Sin* only excepted: That he was conceived by the *Power* of the *Holy Spirit of God*, in the womb of a pure Virgin, and born of her, whereby he became both *God* and *Man* in *one Person*, was called by the Name of *Jesus* and *Christ*: And after he had lived a most *pure* and *unspotted Life*, was falsly accused by the People of the *Jews* before *Pontius Pilate* the *Roman* Governor, and was put to the *shameful* and *painful* Death of the Cross; And that it might fully appear that he had suffered even unto Death, a Spear was thrust into his Side while he was upon the Cross; and after his Body was taken down, it was laid in a Sepulchre, and continued there, without Life, until the third Day.

Now that we may understand how we are concerned in this Matter, we must here take Notice, that the first Man and Woman, *Adam* and *Eve*, whom God created at the beginning of the World, and from whom all Mankind are descended: This *first Man and Woman*, I say, soon after they were created, did commit a very great *Sin*, and highly offended *Almighty God*, in eating of the Fruit of that Tree, which God had *positively* and *strictly* forbidden them to eat, under the Threatning of a very great Punishment. By *this* Sin of theirs, their Nature became weakened and corrupted,

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and very much inclined to *Sin* and *Wickedness*. And because the Nature of the Children must needs be like to that of their Parents, the *Corruption of the Nature of those two Persons*, who were the common Parents of all Mankind, did communicate an *universal Corruption* of Nature to all their Posterity; by which all Mankind has ever since been naturally inclined to do those Things which God has *forbid*, and to leave undone those Things which he has *commanded*: Which Corruption of our Nature is what we commonly call by the Name of *Original Sin*.

And besides this Original Sin, there is no Man (except *Jesus Christ*) who has lived to such an Age, as to be capable of governing and managing his own Actions; but what has committed many actual Sins and Transgressions; upon both which Accounts we are all *by Nature*, rendered unfit for, and uncapable of, that Eternal Happiness which God had provided for us; and also are become exposed to the *Wrath* of God, and to that *Eternal Punishment* which his Justice has prepared for Sinners.

This is the sad and wretched Condition which all Mankind, *by Nature*, are in, ever since the Sin of our first Parents. But notwithstanding that Man had thus brought himself into this *evil State*, yet *God in his infinite Mercy* would not forsake, or wholly cast him off; but was pleased again to admit us all into a Capacity of being restored to his *Favour*, and to that *eternal Happiness in the Life to come*, of which our original and actual Sins had deprived us. And in order to this, he condescended to *send his Son into the World, to take our Nature upon him*, and to become our *Redeemer*: His Sufferings and Death being accepted of by God, as a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the

whole

whole World: For the Sake of which, and of his most holy and unspotted Life, God has been pleased to promise Pardon and Acceptance to all those, who either before, or since *Christ*'s coming into the World, have, or shall embrace the true Faith, heartily repent of their former Sins, and carefully lead their Lives according to the Laws and Commandments of God. And this which *Jesus Christ* has thus done and obtained for us, is commonly called by the Name of the *Work of our Redemption*.

Furthermore, we are taught to believe that *Jesus Christ* after his Death did descend into Hell. But since God has not thought it necessary, in his Word, to give us a clear and distinct Account, either what Place is meant by *Hell*, or for what Reason *Christ* did descend thither, there is no Reason why we should trouble ourselves with any *curious Enquiry* into this Matter.

And after it had sufficiently appeared, that *Jesus Christ* was truly dead; upon the *third* Day after his Death he rose again to *Life*, appeared to his *Apostles*, and very many of his *Disciples*, was seen and handled by them, and *eat*, *drank*, and *conversed* with them, for the Space of no less than *forty* Days (that in that Time they might have *sufficient* Assurances of the Reality of his Resurrection) after which, in the Sight of a Multitude of them, he was openly *taken up*, and *ascended into Heaven*, where he remains in the highest Glory, which is call'd *sitting at the Right Hand of God*; where he continues *for ever*, to make *Intercession with God for us*.

Concerning the *third* Person in the holy Trinity, who is called the *Holy Ghost*, or *Holy Spirit*, because he works *Holiness* in us, we are taught to believe that, soon after

Christ's Ascension into Heaven, the *Holy Ghost*, being sent by the *Father* and the *Son*, and *coming forth* from them, did in a *wonderful* Manner descend upon the *Apostles* and *Disciples* of *Christ*; enlightening their Minds, and opening their Understandings, that they might understand the holy Scriptures, and know the *Will* of God; giving them Gifts and Abilities to teach and preach the Gospel with *Truth* and *Power*; and enabling them to speak all Sorts of Languages, that they might instruct all the several Nations and People of the World; and giving them Power to work Miracles, for the better confirming those Things which they taught and preached.

Now although the Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel do not appear in these Days to be endowed with the same miraculous Gifts and Abilities as the Apostles were (there being *other* sufficient Means for the Instruction of the People, and Confirmation of the true Faith and Religion) yet we are assured, that where any Man in an honest and lawful Way, endeavours with Sincerity and Diligence to improve his Understanding, and increase his Knowledge, in the Things that relate to *God* and *Religion*, for the Good both of himself and others; the holy Spirit of God will not be *wanting* to *such a Man*, but will assist his pious and honest Endeavours, and will more and more enlighten his Mind, that he may grow and encrease in the Knowledge of those Things which are necessary both to his own, and others Salvation. And thus the *Holy Ghost* is the immediate Author and Worker of those Gifts and Graces within us which are necessary for the *Edification*; that is to say, the *Instruction* of all *Christian People*.

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And whereas by Nature we are all of us inclined to Evil, and unable of ourselves to think or do any Thing as we should, the holy Spirit of God, besides the enlightening of our Minds with the Knowledge of those things which are necessary to Salvation, does also move and work upon our Conscience, our Will, and Affections, in order to incline and bring us to, and assist us in, the diligent and constant Practice of those things which God requires from us. And thus the *Holy Ghost* is also the Author of Holiness in us; (I mean if we comply with his Motions, and do not resist them) which is called the *Work of Sanctification*.

The whole Congregation of People, who, by the outward preaching of the Gospel, and the inward Motions of the holy Spirit, have been called and brought to receive and embrace the true Faith, and baptized in the Name of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*; all these Persons, I say, together with their Children, are called by the Name of the *Church* of *Christ*. And as a *King* is the *Head* of his *Kingdom*, so is *Christ* the *King* and *Head* of his *Church*: And the very end and Design of *Christ*'s calling and gathering his Church, being the promoting of true Godliness here, in order to Salvation hereafter; for this Reason the Church is said to be *holy*, although many Persons who are ungodly, may *outwardly* appear and profess to be Christians, and live in the visible Communion of the Church; as one that is a *Rebel* in his *Heart*, may yet pretend to be a *Subject*, and live in outward Society with those that are *faithful* to the Government.

Furthermore, As a Kingdom or Common-wealth by its Laws and Constitutions is but one Society, although evil Men may raise Factions, make Parties, and cause Divisions

within

within it; so our Saviour *Christ Jesus* appointed and called but *one* Church, in the *Communion* or Fellowship of which, all *Saints*, that is, all good Christians, are for ever to be joined and united, and to partake in common the Advantages and Privileges which God has promised to that Society; although by the *Perverseness* of some, and the *Mistakes* of others, this same Church, which ought to be entirely *one*, both in *Faith* and *Charity*, is divided into contrary Parties, which refuse and renounce Communion with one another.

And whereas, before the coming of *Christ*, the Church of God, that is to say, the People whom God had outwardly called, and made himself and his Will known unto them by his revealed Word; whereas this Church, I say, was then confined to *one particular Place and Nation*, that is to say, to the Temple of *Jerusalem*, and the Children of *Israel*; *Jesus Christ* has called *all* Nations and People indifferently into his Church, offering the Advantages and Privileges thereof, in as ample a Manner to the *Gentiles* as to the *Jews*; and accepting of true *Faith*, *Repentance*, *Obedience* and *Worship*, alike in all Parts and Places of the whole World: Upon which Account the Church is called *Catholick*, that is to say, *Universal*.

As there is a Covenant, that is to say, a *mutual Agreement* or *Promise* made between a *Husband* and his *Wife*, a *Master* and his *Servant*, a *King* and his *People*: So in like Manner, is there a Covenant made between *God*, in and through *Jesus Christ* on the *one* Part, and the *Church* on the *other*. Every Member of the Church for his Part, promises and engages to perform those Things which God requires in order to Salvation, which, at the beginning

 I told

I told you, were *Faith*, *Obedience*, and *Repentance*: And God for his Part has promised, for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*, that he will *give the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit* to all those who make a good Use thereof; that he will *pardon the Sins* of those who truly repent: that altho' when we die, our Bodies do return to the Earth, out of which they were taken, as our Souls do to God that gave them, yet a *Day* shall come when this World shall have an *End*, and *Jesus Christ* shall come to judge *all Mankind*, at which Time, the Bodies of all Men shall be *raised* again, and *reunited* to their Souls: And whereas they who have *lived wickedly*, and *died impenitently*, shall be condemned to *eternal Torments*, with the *Devil* and his *evil Spirits*, who were cast out of Heaven for their *Rebellion* against God: they who *faithfully* and *sincerely* perform those Things which God requires, shall be rewarded with everlasting *Happiness* and *Joy* in Heaven in the Presence of God for evermore.

And thus we have heard what are the chief of those Things which God has made known to Mankind in order to our *Belief*. The next Thing to be considered is, what *Grounds* and *Assurance* we have, upon which we *may*, and *ought* to believe them.

And here in the *first* Place, some of these Things are to be believed, because we are assured of them by our own *Reason* and *Understanding*. Thus for Example, our own *Reason* informs us, that the World was made and framed by *Almighty God*, because we see so much *Order*, *Beauty*, and *Usefulness*, in the *whole*, and *every Part* of it: That *God is Eternal*, *most Wise*, *Good*, *Just*, *Powerful*, *and Perfect*, because he is the *first Cause* of all *Things*:

That

That *good Men* shall be *rewarded*, and *wicked Men* punished, because *God* is *Good* and *Just*, *Wise* and *Powerful*, and that these *Rewards* and *Punishments* shall be distributed in the *Life which is to come*, because we very often see wicked Men *prosperous*, and good Men much afflicted, as long as they remain in this Life. These, I say, and some such Things as these are, abundantly taught us even by our *Reason alone*, and therefore ought to be received and believed, even tho' God had not made them farther known unto us by any Revelation.

But, we have a farther *ground* to believe not only these, and such like Things as were last mentioned, but also all the rest of those Things of which I have been giving an account; and that is, because they are plainly contained in *that Book* which we commonly call the *Holy Scripture*; to which Book we ought to give *Credit*, because the Doctrine which is contained in that Part of it, which is called the *New Testament*, was confirmed not only by the *Miracles* and *wonderful Works*, but also by the *Death* and *Sufferings* of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles, and many of his Disciples. And for the other Part of it, which is called the *Old Testament*, we ought to give the like Credit to that also, because *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles do so often in the *New Testament* give Testimony of the Truth of it, and assure us, that it, as well as the *New*, was written by *Holy Men* who were inspired by the *Holy Spirit of God*.

And although the several Parts of this Holy Book were originally written in such Languages as are not now generally understood by the common People; yet since God, in his Providence, has all along stirred up the Spirits of so

many

many holy and learned Men, to bestow so much Care and Pains both in the keeping and preserving, and also in the translating and explaining of this Book, and every Part of it; we may be very well assured that if those who are unlearned, do give themselves *diligently* to the *hearing* and *reading* of it, in such Languages as they do understand, and also are careful to *receive* and *follow* such Instructions as godly Men, both by *preaching* and *writing* do give them out of it, God, who is *good* and *merciful*, will *undoubtedly* accept of them, because that, in this Case, they do all that is within their *Power* to do, and more cannot with any Reason be required from them.

But if any Man should here tell me, that some of those Things which the Holy Scripture proposes to be believed, are far above our Knowledge and Capacity, and therefore that it seems impossible for us to give our *Assent* to them, because we are not able to *understand* them: I answer, that if any Man would persuade me to believe a Thing which was plainly *contrary to Sense and Reason*, and should pretend that it was revealed by God, I should immediately, in such a Case, refuse to comply or yield my Assent, because I am sure that a good and gracious God will never require such *monstrous* and *absurd* Things from his Creatures: He never will impose it upon us to *believe*, that *Bitter* is *Sweet*, or *Sweet Bitter*; that *Darkness* is *Light*, or *Light Darkness*; *that what we see, feel, and taste, to be a small Portion of Bread, is a Human Body*; *or, that one and the same Body can be entirely in many several and far distant Places at once.* — Such Things as these, I say, I am sure God will never impose upon us to believe; because he has so framed the Mind of Man, as to reject all such *Absurdities*

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and *Contradictions* as these, as soon as ever he hears them named. But as for Things which do not appear to be *absurd*, but only are dark and obscure, and not *contrary* to our Understanding, altho' it may be very far *above* it, if God has thought fit to declare some such Things as these unto us, there can be no Reason why we should not give Credit to them upon his Authority. A Man who is born *blind*, believes that there is such a Thing as *Light*, (altho' he knows not what it is) because all his Neighbours tell him so; and if the *Holy Scripture* tells me that there are three Persons in the *Unity* of the Divine Nature, and that the *Divine* and *Human* Nature are joined together in the single *Person* of *Christ*, why ought I not to give my Assent to these Things, altho' I do not understand the Manner of them?

And thus have I given some Account of the *first* thing which God requires from us; namely, to believe what he has made known, which is called *Faith*. I proceed therefore to the *second* thing which he requires from us: which is, to live according to those Rules or Laws which he has given us, which is called *Obedience*.

The Way whereby we come to know what the Laws of God are, is partly by our *own Reason*, and more fully by the *Holy Scriptures*. Most of the Things which God commands, are in themselves so very reasonable and plain, that they who have not the Light of his Word, may yet very easily know them, even by the Guidance of their own *Understanding*, as will presently appear, when we come to take a View of the Particulars. And for the further directing and assisting our *Reason*, as also for the teaching us some Part of his Will, which otherwise of ourselves we

could

could never come to know; he has given us a *full Account of all his Laws in his revealed Word*: And this is sufficient Reason to oblige us to keep them, because he who is our *Creator* and *Redeemer*, our *Supreme Lord*, our *Master* and our *Judge*, *requires* it from us.

The chief and most fundamental of the Laws of God (and under which all the rest may be comprehended) are those which are commonly known by the Name of the *Ten Commandments*: But for the more easy taking a full View both of these and all the rest of God's Laws together, they are generally divided into *three* Sorts; the *first* whereof, contains all those Laws which teach us *our Duty to God*: the *second* contains those Laws which teach every Man *his Duty towards himself*; and the *third* contains those Laws which teach us *our Duty towards other Men*: Under which Division I shall endeavour to give as short, yet plain and comprehensive an Account as I can, of them.

First, then, as for the *Duty which we owe unto God*; the chief Parts or Branches of it are these, namely, to acknowledge and believe all those Things which he has made known (of which I have already spoken:)

To *own* that whatever he *commands* or *threatens* is very *just* and *fit*:

To *hope* for, and expect the Performance of all his *Promises* to us upon those very Terms and Conditions that he has set down; neither presuming upon *God's Mercy*, as if he would bless us, although we continue in our *Sins*; nor despairing of his *Goodness* and *Favour* towards us, if we *repent* of them and serve him faithfully.

To love God above all Things because he is so excellent and *perfect* in himself, and so *good* and *gracious* to us; and

to *manifest* this our Love towards him, by our *earnest Endeavours* to do all Things which may *please* him, *and by striving to enjoy and be with him, as much as we can, here in this Life by Prayer and Meditation, and also in the Life to come by preparing ourselves to be for ever happy with him in Heaven.*

To fear God above all Things, because he is most Just and Powerful, and will certainly *punish* us for our Sins, if we do not *repent* of them; for which Reason, we should be more afraid to *offend him*, than to *disoblige* all the Men in the World:

To put our Trust in God in all Manner of *Danger* or *Distress*, assuring ourselves, *that if we continue to serve him faithfully, he will give us Grace and Spiritual Strength, whereby we shall be enabled to resist Temptations, and to perform our Duty*; and also that he will either deliver us from the *Troubles* and *Afflictions* of this World, if he sees it *best* for us, or else will give us *Strength* and *Patience* to bear them, and make them serviceable, in the End, to our *eternal Happiness*:

To *humble* ourselves before God, in a due consideration of his *Greatness* and *Goodness*, and our own *Weakness* and *Unworthiness*; submitting ourselves to his Holy Will and Pleasure; in all Things *chearfully* obeying whatever *he* commands, and not only *patiently*, but *thankfully* bearing whatever *he*, in the Course of his Providence, shall think fit to lay upon us; and, the more we are *afflicted*, endeavouring the more to be *fruitful* and *abound* in all the Works of *Virtue* and *Piety*:

To *honour* God inwardly by acknowledging his infinite Greatness and Goodness, and to *express* his Honour towards him,

him, in our outward Actions: coming to the Place of his *Worship* with *Seriousness*, and behaving ourselves there with *Gravity* and *Decency*; paying a due Respect to his *Ministers* for the sake of their Function, being ready to contribute what in us lies, to the Advancement of his Glory; *employing his own Day in Works and Exercises of Piety and Charity*; *Reading, or Hearing, or Meditating upon his Holy Word*, and endeavouring to get the best Instructions we can of it; giving *due Attendance* upon, and *Obedience* unto, those Ordinances which he has appointed, such as *Preaching*, *Catechising*, *Baptism*, and the *Holy Communion*; often calling to Mind the *Vow* which we enter into at *Baptism*, whereby we are admitted into the visible Society and Fellowship of *Christ*'s Church;

To prepare ourselves constantly and diligently by *Prayer*, *Meditation*, *Self-Examination*, and *Repentance*, that we may be fit to come and *eat of that Bread*, and *drink of that Cup*, which *Christ* has appointed as a *Remembrance of his Death and Sufferings for us*; *and also as the Means whereby we partake of and communicate in the Merits of his Passion*; for which Reason it is called the *Holy Communion*:

Never mentioning *God's Holy Name* but with *Seriousness* and *Reverence*; abstaining from all *vain*, *profane*, and *false Swearing*, *Cursing*, and *Blaspheming*; always making a *Conscience* of performing faithfully whatever we have bound ourselves to by *an Oath*, and never making a *Jest* or a *By-word* of any thing that relates to *God*, or wherein *Religion* is concerned;

And last of all, to worship God both publickly and privately; that is to say, to praise him for his *Goodness* and *Excellency*; to give Thanks unto him for his *Blessings* both *Spi-*

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ritual and *Temporal* which we have received from him, to pray to him for all Things necessary both for our *Souls* and for our *Bodies*; to *confess our Sins* unto him, and to *beg the Pardon* of them from *him*; offering up all these our Devotions in the *Name* and through the *Mediation* of *Jesus Christ* our most blessed Saviour and Redeemer.

These, I say, are the main Branches, and fundamental Parts of our Duty to God: And as we must be ever careful and diligent to perform all these Things towards him, so must we not, upon any Account, render this, or any Part of this same Duty to any Thing or Person but to *God alone*. We must neither *love*, nor *fear*, nor *hope*, nor *trust in*, nor *honour*, nor *worship*, nor *praise*, nor *pray* to any *Saint*, or *Angel*, or *Image*, or any Thing whatsoever, whether in *Heaven* or upon *Earth*, in the same or the like Manner as we perform these Things towards Almighty God: For *God is a jealous God*, and will not endure any *Rival* or *Competitor* in that *Love*, *Honour*, and *Duty* which we owe unto him.

I come now in the *second* Place, to those Laws of God which concern the *Duty of every Man*, *towards himself*: The chief Branches of which are these that follow; that is to say.

To be *humble* in our own Thoughts, considering what *frail* and *infirm*, what *ignorant* and *forgetful*, Creatures we are:

Not to desire any praise from *Men*, but to refer the Glory of every thing that may seem good in us, wholly and entirely *to God*, who is the Author of it.

To be *meek* and *calm* in our *Temper* and *Behaviour*, never suffering *Anger*, or any other *Passion* to grow so strong within

within us, as to make us either *say* or *do* any thing that is unbecoming a *Christian*:

Often to consider and think upon our State and Condition, with respect both to *this* World and *that which is to come*, that so we may be always upon our Guard against *Temptations to Sin*.

To be patient and contented in all Estates and Conditions of Life, as well in *Sickness* as in *Health*, in *Adversity* as in *Prosperity*; neither murmuring nor repining at any Evil that befalls us, nor envying those who seem to be in a better Condition than we: not coveting, or in the least desiring either *Riches* or *Preferment*, but as *God sees fit*, and may conduce most to his Glory; but always submitting to the secret Hand and Directions of God's Providence, which is in every Thing that comes to pass in the World.

We are also to be *diligent* and *industrious* in improving ourselves more and more in the *Knowledge* of Religion, and the *Practice* of every Sort of Virtue; making the best use we can of that Portion of Grace which we *already* have, that so more may be given to us.

To be very *chaste* and *modest* both in *our Actions*, and also in our very *Words* and *Thoughts*, avoiding not only all *filthy Lust and Uncleanness*, but even all *Manner of immodest Discourse*; and mortifying and subduing all *impure Desires*.

To be *moderate in Eating*, *sober* and *temperate* in *Drinking*; not wasting over much Time in *Sleep* or *Idleness*, or any *Sort of Recreations*, much less in such as are *unlawful*.

Not bestowing much Cost in *Apparel* or *Furniture*, or any other Thing which serves only to please our *Fancy*, or gratify our *Curiosity*; but always making such an Use

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of those Creatures which God has given us, and those Liberties which he has allowed us, as may tend most to his *Glory*, the *Good* of others, and the Health and Welfare both of our *Souls* and *Bodies*.—And this shall suffice for a brief Account of that Duty which every Man, *by God's Law*, is obliged to perform towards himself.

And now, in the *Third* Place, for that Duty which we owe to all other Men.

By the Laws of God, we are obliged to *love all Men* whatsoever (whether they are *Poor* or *Rich*, *Low* or *High*, *Friends*, *Strangers*, or *Enemies*) altho' not altogether as *well*, yet as *truly* and *sincerely*, without any *Fraud* or *Dissimulation*, as we *love ourselves*; and this our Love must never fail to be shewn, by our *hearty Prayers* for the *Welfare of every Man*, and our *sincere Endeavours* to prevent his *Hurt*, and promote his *Good*, as far as we have Ability and Opportunity for it; always *remembring* and taking Care, that in our doing *Good unto one Man*, we do not offer any *Injury*, or neglect any Part of that Duty which we owe unto *another*; but doing unto every Man, as we should judge it to be *reasonable* and *conscionable* for us to *expect* and *desire* that they should do by us, if we were in their Case and Condition.

We must neither *take away* nor *detain* from any other Man, any Thing which is his *lawful Right*; but whatsoever is fairly due to him, either by the Laws of God, or those of the Land, or by any lawful Promise or Agreement made to or with him, must freely and readily be rendered to him, without putting him to the Trouble of suing or contending for it:

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The Life of no Man must be taken away (except by the lawful Authority of the Magistrate, or in one's own *just* and *necessary* Defence) nor must his Body be *maimed* or *hurt*, or his *good Name injured* or *lessened*, either by *raising* or helping to spread any *false* or *ill-grounded Reports* concerning him, or by publishing his *Faults* or *Failings*, except in *Justice* and *Charity* to others we become bound to do it: But on the contrary, we must be ready, as we have Opportunity, to contribute what in us lies, to preserve the *Life*, and *Health*, and *good Name*, as well as the Goods and Estate of our Neighbour, if they appear to be in Danger, either by any Accident, or, by the malicious Design of another against them: We must not *tempt* or *allure*, or by our *evil Example* encourage other Men to commit Sin; but as we may *conveniently*, we must *admonish*, *advise*, *reprove*, and *exhort* them for their Souls Good:

Nor may we deceive any Man by *false* or *equivocating* Speeches, or by breaking such *Promises* as we have made to him; but must be *true*, *faithful*, and *sincere* in all our *Conversation* and *Dealing* with all Men.

Those who are *Poor*, or in any Distress or Affliction, we are bound, to the best of our Power, to *relieve*, *help*, and *comfort*; and altho' *Malefactors may* and *must* be punished for the *public* Good, for a *Terror* to others, and for the saving and protecting the *Lives*, *Estates*, and *good Names* of *honest Men*, yet nothing of this Nature must be done either out of *private Hatred* or *Resentment*, or with greater *Cruelty* or *Severity* than what the Law requires, and is necessary for the true End for which such Punishments are, or ought to be always designed.

They who are under Errors as to Matters of Religion, are to be *argued* with, and *persuaded* for their Soul's good, in the *mildest* and most *gentle* Manner; nor should any *Heat* or *Anger*, *Railing* or *Reviling*, be made use of against the greatest *Hereticks* or *Schismaticks*; neither ought any Man to be persecuted or punished by the Civil Power, barely for his *Mistakes* in Matters of Doctrine, provided that he be *peaceable*, and his *Practice* good, and that he neither *attempts* nor *teaches* any thing which tends to the *disturbing of the State*, or to the debauching of the *Morals* of the People.

They who without any just Cause are *publick* Enemies to the State, (whether they are forcign Foes or domestick Rebels) may be resisted, and under the *Commission of lawful Authority*, subdued by Force of Arms.

If a private Enemy unlawfully assaults, or any way endeavours to injure a Man in his *Person*, *Goods*, or *good Name*, it is lawful for the Person who is thus assaulted or injured to stand up in his own Defence, as far as the *Justice* and *Exigence* of his Case requires. But when we have thus done all that is necessary, or that we are able honestly to do, for the Preservation of ourselves or the Publick, we must not proceed farther out of *Hatred* or *Malice*, to do any Thing merely to vex, or grieve, or hurt, even the *greatest* and most *implacable* Enemies: But on the contrary, having so secured ourselves, as that they can do us no Hurt, we must always be ready to do them all *Manner* of *Good* that is consistent with our own *necessary Safety*, and with that Duty which we owe to the rest of Mankind.

Husbands must love their *Wives* with a most tender

Affection;

Affection; of which they must give all the Proof they can in all their *Actions*: And *Wives* must in like Manner *love*, and also be *obedient* to their Husbands, and each of them must be strictly *just* and *faithful* to the other in *all Things*.

Parents must honestly endeavour to provide for their Children, and to teach and breed them up in such a manner as may be best, both for their Souls and Bodies, diligently and tenderly watching over them, to keep them from all Harm, countenancing and encouraging them in every Thing that is good; and reproving, and sometimes correcting them, but without Bitterness or Passion, when they find them given to any Thing that is evil.

Masters and *Mistresses* must be just and merciful to their *Servants*, and *Servants* must behave themselves not only with *Faithfulness* and *Diligence*, but also with *Obedience* and *Respect* towards their *Masters* and *Mistresses*.

The *Pastors* and *Ministers* of God's Church must be *exemplary* in their Lives, *diligent* and *industrious* in their *Teaching* and *Preaching* of *wholesome* and *useful* Doctrine, and administring and dispensing of all the *Ordinances* of God, that they may, as much as in them lies, promote the Salvation of the Souls that are committed to their Charge:

And the *People*, on the *other Hand*, must pay a Respect to their *Pastors* and *Ministers*, for their Work and Function's Sake; giving as constant and reverend Attendance as they can upon all *holy* Offices, and carefully *hearkening* to, and *putting in Practice*, all such wholesome *Directions* and *Instructions*, as they do or shall receive from them.

And lastly, all *Magistrates* and *Rulers*, in their several

 Stations,

Stations, must govern the People that are under them, according to the *Laws* and *Constitutions* of the Land, administring *Justice* with *Diligence* and *Dispatch*, and without *Fear*, *Favour*, or *Affection*, of, or to any Man; always tempering (as much as in them lies) the *Rigour* and *Severity* of *Human Laws*, with that *Equity*, *Moderation*, and *Mercy*, that the *Law of God* requires, and is consistent with the *Publick Good*.

And the People, *on the other Hand*, must behave themselves towards their *Rulers* with *Honour* and *Reverence* to their *Persons*, and *Submission* and *Obedience* to their *lawful Authority*, making Conscience of performing whatever the Law of the Land requires, except it should so fall out, that something is thereby commanded, which is evidently contrary to God's Law: There being nothing else that can excuse a Subject from giving Obedience to the *Laws* and *Constitutions* of that *Government* under which he *lives*, except he can make it appear, that *God himself* requires the *contrary* from him.

And thus I have done with the *second* Thing which God requires from us, which is, Obedience to those Laws or Rules that he has given us. I come now to the *third* and *last* Thing that God requires from us, and that is *Repentance*; which, although it may be reckoned as a Part of our *Obedience*, because it is a Thing *commanded by God*, yet since it has an equal Relation to every one of the Divine Laws, of which I have been giving an Account, I thought it might not be improper to reserve it here to be spoken of in the *last* Place.

Now, when a Man has transgressed any of the *Laws of*

God, and thereby made himself liable to his *Wrath* and *eternal Damnation*; the first Step that he must take, in order to *Repentance* and *Reconciliation* with him, is to be truly *sorrowful for his Sins*, whereby he has provoked so *good* and *gracious*, so *just* and *powerful* a *God*, and run himself into so great Danger. But the Truth of this Sorrow is not to be judged of by the *Violence* or *Passionateness* of it; but that Man who has such a due Sense of his Sins, as to be effectually moved thereby to *forsake* and *amend* them: *He*, and *he only*, can be said to be *truly* and *acceptably* sorrowful for them.

Now this Sorrow for Sin must, in the next Place, move him to make an humble *Acknowledgment* and *Confession* of them to *God:* And that he may the better perform this, it is necessary that he often examine his own *Conscience*, and endeavour to bring his Sins to his Remembrance.

And at the same Time when he confesses his Sins, he must also humbly beg *God*'s *Pardon* for them for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*, who died for us; and must put on serious and stedfast *Resolutions*, that he will amend them, and lead a *better Life* for the Time to come: And that if he has done any Wrong in *Word* or *Deed* to any other Man whatsoever, he will make *Reparation* and *Restitution* to him, to the best of his Power.

And to conclude all, he must strictly keep and fulfil these *Resolutions* when he has made them; or else all that has gone before will signify *nothing*. For indeed *Reformation* or *Amendment of Life* is the only Thing that *completes* and makes up the true Nature of *Repentance*.

And

And thus I have endeavoured to give a *brief* and *plain* Account of all that God requires as necessary to Salvation. And God of his Mercy direct us to *believe* and *practise* accordingly, and grant that in the End we may enjoy the Reward of all, even eternal Happiness, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

F I N I S.